

COMMENTARY

THE COMMUNIST

His Mentality and His Morals

HAROLD ROSENBERG

Much I prize the doubt. . . .

—Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

THE Englishman of Gilbert and Sullivan's era may have been born either a Liberal or a Conservative, but no one was ever born a Communist. Nor is this form of "greatness" ever thrust upon one. Nor is it something to be lightly grabbed, as the periodic party purges throughout the world attest. Becoming a Communist can only be achieved, the party chiefs often declare, through an intense process of self-transformation—a process that may never be relaxed without the risk of sliding back into an earlier condition of being. The psychological and ethical arduousness of making oneself a Bolshevik is also testified to by the Confessions

HAROLD ROSENBERG here draws together in a portrait what we have learned about the Bolshevik personality in thought and action in the three decades since the Russian Revolution, leaning particularly on two recent biographies of Lenin: *Lenin* by David Shub (Doubleday) and *Three Who Made a Revolution* by Bertram Wolfe (Dial). Mr. Rosenberg's most recent contribution to COMMENTARY, "Does the Jew Exist?" appeared in the January 1949 issue. He has published a volume of poetry, *Trance Above the Streets*, and has contributed to *Partisan Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Les Temps Modernes*, and many other periodicals. Mr. Rosenberg was born in Brooklyn in 1906.

of the Repentant Ex-Comrade which constitute such a lively branch of modern literature. As part of their Bolshevik discipline, the heroes of Koestler and others had to conquer every personal sentiment in themselves and attain the subjective state of professional executioners. The Communist's trained readiness to crush his sympathies, and the hallucinations that induce that readiness, cannot, however, be isolated from other aspects of his constructed character. In doing so, the confession literature, written from the point of view of moral disillusionment, tends to portray the Communist as a "sick" human being, rather than as a new coherent entity purposefully constructed out of human material.

The Communist, then, is an invented *type* into which a small fraction of contemporary humanity has been able to convert itself. This type was brought into the world by Lenin. He was, and is, its creator. We shall discuss later possible differences between the author and his creation. But reading the recent biographies of Lenin by David Shub (*Lenin: A Biography*) and Bertram Wolfe (*Three Who Made a Revolution*), one cannot fail to recognize in the personality of the founder of Bolshevism the primordial features of the Communist of today. Here is the man who struggles ceaselessly—"for twenty-four hours of the day" and even in his dreams, Axelrod noted—through organizational plot and coun-

ter-plot to grasp unchallenged control of the revolutionary movement, first of Russia then of the entire globe. This man is motivated, Wolfe wisely discerns, not by arrogance or lust for power but by his "unshakeable conviction of his own rightness." Primarily, he is a man whose every act is impelled by the certainty that he, and he alone, knows what must be done on behalf of the future of the revolution, and hence of mankind.

EVERY Communist is a small replica of this Man Who Knows. His knowledge is beyond human question, like that of the revolutionary leader in Sartre's movie *The Chips Are Down*, who through being dead has found out what will happen to the insurrection scheduled for the next day. The Communist, too, possesses a non-terrestrial prescience and can assert without the support of evidence what the situation is and what policy is required to meet it. Here, for example, in a pre-war Soviet film, is a Communist who has arrived at a collective farm far out in the steppes. Trust him to know that it is best for the farmers to stop slaughtering surplus cattle and take to clearing overgrown land for fodder. Or here, in a war film or novel, is a Communist at a battlefield. He does not, like the directing personnel of other armies, confine himself to giving orders and getting them carried out. More like a scout leader than a commander of men, he bears an aroma of perceiving what has been ordained. He will recognize the moment chosen by history for his company to stand and die against overwhelming odds. And he will know, too, how to scare up some trick to prevent this lethal decision from yielding its logical results. In factory work, in mining, in forestry, his role is always the same. And above all, in the revolution, source of his authority. What is the drama of the October revolution to the Communist but the Bolshevik—from Lenin himself in his flat or at a caucus to the leather-jacketed emissary among the peasants of some distant village—foreseeing everything, bringing everything to pass? (Actually, of course, even an account most biased on the side of "historical necessity," like Trotsky's, cannot

describe the Bolshevik seizure of power without creating an impression of improvisation and chance that verges on the farcical. One recalls, for instance, Lenin in disguise yet recognized by everybody; Kerensky leaving the Winter Palace in an open car waving to the insurrectionists; the Commissar of War on a horse with a pistol in his hand galloping to the defense of Petrograd.)

All the other traits of the Communist are derived from his knowingness. For instance, his calm. This commissar seems a bit on edge as to the success of the revolutionary measure he has just proposed for planing pineboards or attacking a convoy. Don't worry. His anxiety is intended only to arouse suspense in his audience of disciples—like an acrobat deliberately missing a try in order to make his curtain act seem a greater triumph. Actually, the Bolshevik knows his plan will succeed, and is internally at rest. Indeed, his calm is deeper than that which comes from mere confidence in a specific outcome. For even if his project does not succeed, it will still have succeeded. It will have been the correct thing to do historically; there was no alternative; and if he was mistaken who could have been right? Since history is continuous, the present failure, like that of the Red Army in 1941, is inevitably a contribution to the larger success that will become visible in the long run.

THE Communist's composure has a fatherly cast, almost divinely fatherly. Like a wise parent, he knows that growth and the victory of reason are compelled to issue by way of simple-mindedness, incomprehension, misguided exuberance. For those of his non-Communist fellow citizens who possess these handicaps he therefore keeps prepared the all-enduring smile with which toddlers are encouraged. Before him shines the pedagogical motto of Lenin: PATIENTLY EXPLAIN. As we shall see, this slogan does not apply to disputes with intellectual opponents; it is reserved for the instruction of the guiltlessly backward. Who these are depends, of course, on the party line—even Catholics and capitalists may during "front" periods be included among the innocently lagging; at other times

they are malicious schemers. Paternal affection streams from the responsibility-laden young Communist upon the gray head of the illiterate Ivan who remains folkloristically attached to his hand plough or machete until the superiority of the tractor has been explained to him; upon the liberal professor who is studying the rudiments of Marxism; upon the corpse of the boy of fourteen who has blown himself up under a German tank. The love of the Bolshevik is the love of the shepherd for his flock; and its tolerant facial expression, made up of a mixture of smugness, boredom, and absent-mindedness, is duplicated on Sunday mornings in homes and chapels throughout the world. It is a physiognomical summary of the social worker's ideal of human existence. The pastoral species of affection comes into existence only in the presence of those standing in an acknowledged relation of intellectual inferiority. The response it aims at is the open mouth and widened eyes of sudden grateful comprehension.

Fables of sheep, idyllic as they are, contain the psychology of impending doom. The wolf is either lurking at the edge of the peaceful meadow or, disguised in sheep's clothing, has penetrated the flock itself. Without this ever-present threat, the shepherd's vocation would amount to but little. In each situation, fortunately, the Communist discovers the traditional lupine foe. "We must remember," said Lenin, "that we are at all times but a hair's breadth from invasion." Curiously, however, the Communist's wolf exists in a kind of double image—he snarls and shows his fangs at the frontier, yet at the same instant baas fraternally close at hand under his false sheep's head. Of course, he is really two separate wolves. One is the outside wolf, from Czarism to American imperialism; the other, the inside, or sheep's clothing wolf, from Menshevism to Trotskyism. But the Communist, perhaps because the sheep fable conforms in some profound way to his metaphysics, always insists that there exists but one monolithic wolf. In his factional struggles long before the Revolution, Lenin discovered the anisotropic formula: Menshevik-Czarist. Since then, Liberals have

been White Guardists; Socialists, British, German, French, Japanese, etc., imperialists; Trotskyists and rightist, "agents of fascism."

The wolf-in-the-sheep image is the most dire. Both Shub and Wolfe quote Lenin's characterization of his own attack on the Mensheviks as "traitors" in 1907: "That tone, that formulation, is not designed to convince, but to break the ranks, not to correct a mistake of the opponent but to annihilate him, to wipe him off the face of the earth." The wolfy wolf represents merely a physical opposition that may be evaded or pacified by compromise. The sheepy wolf, however, threatens to destroy *the very ground of the Communist's existence, his shepherddom*; and he must be annihilated. This enemy from within represents any opposition to Communist knowledge born not of ignorance but of contrary knowledge. The offending knowledge need not be political or historical; it is enough that it leads to informed, rather than naive, non-cooperation. This collective farmer opposes clearing brambles and favors eating the calves because, besides wanting meat, he has calculated that the land is not suitable for tillage—he is a Social Revolutionary White Guardist. This worker withholds enthusiasm for a new speed-up because in his experience such methods bring no increase either in wages or in output—he is a Trotskyist fascist saboteur. *Principled* resistance to the Communist's historical omniscience is the malignant mark of the evil third person in the sheep fable. Turned in his direction, the Communist's face has shed its benign ennui. The bored father has turned into the alert hunter. Now the pastoral vocation, which in Lenin's language makes it "one's duty to wrest the masses" from rival leadership, reveals its most active function—to exterminate.

THE Communist belongs to an elite of the knowing. Thus he is an intellectual. But since all truth has been automatically bestowed upon him by his adherence to the party, he is an intellectual who need not think. The Communist is often criticized for his renunciation of independent thought. But what good is mental activity if one can know more

by giving it up? The Communist is contemptuous of the non-Communist intellectual. The latter goes through all the motions of thinking, but at best he can only hope to arrive at what is already known. At best. More likely his thinking will lead him into error. Not one Bolshevik with a mind of his own who failed at one time or another to deviate from and "betray" Leninism. Actually, the intellectuals are superfluous people. Given the present unfinished state of history, they may have certain uses when friendly. But they have no future, and it is wise to be suspicious of them. The unlettered are much to be preferred.

In this connection, the mind of the Communist is involved in a profound gnostic mystery: thought reels on the rim of error, while knowledge is given to the simple. Ask the worker or the peasant and he will tell you what is hidden from the scholar and the genius. After he had moved into the Kremlin, Shub tells us, "Lenin enjoyed incognito contact with the common people of Moscow, talking with the man on the street, the common laborer and peasant, to get their honest opinions on the Bolshevik cause." Socialists who expressed *their* "honest opinions" were either banished or shot. In his debate with Trotsky on dialectics and logic some years ago, James Burnham cried out indignantly when his opponent spoke of "the dialectics of a fox." Why not? If the worker has his way of knowing that is superior to Martov's or Plekhanov's, why not a fox? Or better still a sheep, since the fox is notoriously tainted with intellectualism and besides must be harder to organize. Not that it is outrageous to speak of the wisdom of the simpleton, of animals, or even of things. It is in the best mystical and poetic tradition and is supported by the experience of great minds. But if messages of grains of sand or old women in the forest are more revealing than the discourse of intellectuals, why should one kind of intellectual, the Marxist-Leninist, be privileged?*

* The privilege is related, of course, to the Bolshevik conception of a party composed of "professional revolutionists" who introduce Marxist "science" into the directionless struggles of the masses.

I regret that it is not possible to develop further at this time this fundamental contradiction of Marxism.

SINCE he alone has the correct answer, the Communist everywhere seeks to control the activities of others. He does not always seek power—we have seen that with Lenin power was not a lust. Power itself is but one means, though perhaps the supreme one, for manipulating people. The Communist may consent to renounce this means temporarily, but never for a moment does he cease to reach for control. To this end he makes himself an expert in the mechanics of organization, for through it men can be controlled with or without authority. To the Communist the map of the world is an organization chart: Lenin's national program cannot be understood without taking this into account. From 1903 to 1917 the life of Lenin is a saga of contriving majorities in conventions, splitting and annihilating opposition factions, packing editorial boards and committees, challenging credentials, laying hold of membership lists, party funds, communication facilities. "His line of thought," said Rosa Luxemburg near the beginning of his leadership, "is cut to the control of party activity." Wolfe points out that factional disputes engaged Lenin's attention to a greater extent in 1912-14 than the impending World War.

To be engaged in combat without pause, "for twenty-four hours in the day," is the Communist's way of being equal to his world, whose primary law is combat. ("The history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggles.") Courage is therefore indispensable to the Communist, and that he is courageous goes without saying. His courage, however, is of a different order than is met with elsewhere. The possibility of his own death simply does not interest him. Individual attachments, power over which gives death its terror, hold a secondary place in his existence. By temperament, understanding, values, the threatened curtailment of his personal future has no meaning to him. As for *the* future, he already knows what it will contain. Thus neither love nor curiosity

contest his willingness to risk his life. In the face of torture, too, his own or another's, his courage preserves its distinction—since he lacks the reaction of *horror*. It is the strangeness of the inner state of the torturer, who resembles a human being, that freezes our spirit. We do not feel horror at the agony inflicted by the surgeon because we know why he “attacks” his patient. The Communist, accepting as sufficient his political explanation of torture, and knowing why his enemy inflicts it upon him, is never horrified by it. Thus enduring torture is for him a purely physical ordeal limited by the resistance capacity of his body. So far is he immune to the shock of mystery that even sadists among his tormentors appear to him in a political rather than a psychological or moral perspective; they only imagine they torture for pleasure, actually it is the policy they have accepted that turns them into fiends. Hence the Communist finds nothing questionable in the party's enlisting of former Gestapo or SS men in the service of Communism. The only issue for him is: have they abandoned the program that made them fascist murderers for one that makes them the vanguard of the working class?

THE readiness of the Communist to clasp to his bosom the hated enemy of yesterday and to denounce as traitors and monsters his former allies and even adored leaders has often led him to be considered cynical or immoral. Quite the contrary—such reversals of judgment and feeling are the very key to the Communist's morality and the fullest expression of his constructed character. Accompanied by the strongest passions, they have nothing in common with switches in attitude resulting from a mere absence or relaxation of principles. Morally weak or indifferent people may, for the sake of expediency, collaborate with individuals whom they have denounced and drop former friends as a liability; but this is merely a shift in relations. With the Communist a change in the policy of the party transforms *the nature itself* of the former friend or ally. At one stroke the imperialist Roosevelt disappears and is replaced by Roose-

velt the democratic champion of the peoples—while the isolationist peace-lover of this morning emerges this afternoon as a masked Nazi. It is as if Roosevelt or Hitler had never lived before the day of the change—as if their entire existence were conferred upon them by the party line. Thus the Communist's judgments stem from a metaphysics of being, and are the moral extension of that metaphysics. The question of what a Churchill or a Browder is having been decided, the Communist bestows upon him the complete measure of his contempt or adulation. When a new decision is made, a new Churchill or Hitler or Browder appears, and the present judgment is extinguished in its opposite.

Since the way his being is defined by the party alone determines whether a man be good or evil, the private harm or advantage he has brought to the Communist plays no part in the latter's judgment of him. Non-Communists or incomplete Communists have been shocked to find themselves assaulted in the speeches of Communists who have been their close friends and who have accepted favors from them. Such an attack is no sign of either ingratitude or hypocrisy. It is an act consistent with the metaphysical-moral structure of the Communist type, in which individual experience has no place.

Accustomed to moral ambiguities, conflicting emotions, hesitations, doubts, we are constantly astonished both by the automatic workings of the Communist moral mechanism and the immediate and total character of the emotional responses it produces. In this area it is we, not the Ukrainian peasant, who stand gaping before a 20th-century super-machine. A narrative in *The Dark Side of the Moon* presents the contrast between old-style feeling and the Communist-made model. It is told by a Polish girl who was deported to Russia during the Stalin-Hitler pact. In a settlement for delinquent girls she and other young Polish deportees had been threatened with death by Soviet fellow-inmates who resented their stubborn refusal to acknowledge that Poland “had ceased to exist.” All this was suddenly changed when, after having been attacked, the USSR signed the Polish-Soviet

Agreement. A political director brought the girls the glad tidings. "He was smiling and joking [they now belong to the flock]. . . ." the narrative continues. "This news was so unexpected that we were quite stunned. A thousand thoughts crossed my mind. The feeling of happiness was marred by a still stronger realization of the wrongs we had suffered. The Soviet girls cried '*Da zd rastfuiyet Polsha*,' 'Hail Poland!' We kept silent. From that moment we were heroines, and Poland became a nation with a great past and a great future."

The Polish girls were "stunned" into silence by their conflicting feelings, in which personal resentment played a big part. In contrast the Russians forgot instantaneously that they had once thought these young people had earned death by choosing for themselves the non-existence of Poland. The Poles had been reborn "with a great past and a great future" out of the new party line. As allies they deserved to be hailed for that heroism which pertained to all those united against the Nazis in the "Peoples' War."

THE power to erase and restore human status is given to the Communist by his historical clairvoyance. For the Communist the humanity of an individual lies in his historical role and this role is at all times wholly visible to the Communist. Accordingly, his judgment is that of history itself. It states who exists truly and who has but a sham existence, in that his extinction is already under way. It is as if the evolutionary process announced its preferences in moral terms. Lenin's reference to an opponent as a "political corpse" is more than an estimate of the value of his views. Like Trotsky's favorite description of people as "swept into the dust-bin of history," it implies that he has entered into non-being in everything but the physical sense. Actually killing such persons or removing them to Siberian camps simply assists time in its hygienic tasks. "The prisoner is to get it into his head as soon as possible," testifies a Polish Socialist in *The Dark Side of the Moon*, "that he is nothing but a thing and that nobody has any reason to be particular about the way he

treats him." Prisoners of other systems have also been treated as "things." But with the Communist the separation of the individual from the human species is not a by-product of the callousness of police, military, or colonial administrations. It flows from his metaphysics of man and his relation to reality, and he justifies it by that metaphysics. For him a person conceived to be in a situation that deprives him of his past and future, like the defendants at the Moscow Trials, has literally lost his human identity. Vyshinsky's designation of Bukharin as "this damnable cross of a fox and a swine" and others as "beasts in human form," terminating in his demand that they "must be shot like dirty dogs," was not just hysterical vituperation. The animal images belong to a serious attempt to establish by analogy a definition of creatures who are another kind of animal than man.

Just as the "traitor" is made of a non-human substance, so also is the Communist leader. Regarding some human beings as nothings or sub-men always goes hand in hand with the adoration of other human beings as gods or supermen. Shub describes the surprise and distaste of Lenin at the adulation he received from his comrades; apparently, he could not comprehend what had made his creature into an idol-worshipper. Yet the explanation is not so difficult. Most historians of the Bolshevik movement point to the strain of Nechaevism in it. Nechaev's *Catechism of a Revolutionist* centered on the training of the revolutionist, through the systematic elimination of all sentiment, in utilizing human beings, including his fellow-fighters, as things. In his figure of Nechaev in *The Possessed*, Dostoevsky exposed the idolatrous core of this discipline. "Stavrogin, you are beautiful," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, almost ecstatically. ". . . You are my idol! You injure no one, and everyone hates you. You treat every one as an equal, and yet every one is afraid of you. . . . To sacrifice life, your own or another's, is nothing to you. You are just the man that's needed. It's just such a man as you that I need. I know no one but you. You are the leader, you are the sun and I am your worm." The utter contempt for persons historically

worthless or "dead," and the resolve to utilize them and then cast them aside, which Lenin instilled in the Bolshevik, could not fail to complete itself in the adoration of the leader—the figure who for him is the world proletariat and its promise of human brotherhood, salvation, and transcendence.

LENIN'S personality is without a trace of bad conscience—all his biographers concur in this. Of the Red terror he speaks with light-heartedness, almost with levity. History does not disturb itself with regrets*—nor does its personification, the Communist. "Don't you understand," Shub quotes Lenin as asking, "that if we do not shoot these few leaders we may be placed in a position where we would need to shoot ten thousand workers?" Even the latter "need" would reveal itself to him as beyond the possibility of doubt, as in the massacre of the Kronstadt sailors. Ruthlessness for him is an indispensable means for conserving human life. He does not resort to it on his own behalf or for his group or his nation—with him death is not in the employ of an ego, as with the Nazis. It serves the universal; it works for the good as such.

What deeper temptation can exist for the man awakened to the modern crisis than to accept this solution to the problem of action? He has seen increasingly large masses of people sentenced to enslavement and death. He has recognized that in his time the old issues of poverty and injustice, which earlier generations of humanitarians could approach with a certain softness and leisureliness, have given way to the issue of human survival itself. He knows that in such a situation action must be drastic, must be absolute. Yet this call to be "hard" torments his consciousness. He is wracked by the impermeable puzzle of how to preserve in the plunge into action the fragile contingencies of the humanly desirable—freedom, sociability, truthfulness. By becoming a Communist or even a fellow traveler he can dissolve this riddle and with it the mental

anguish. Through the party he will inherit Lenin's "unshakeable conviction," he will know from moment to moment that his actions, no matter what they be, are necessary to rescue mankind from catastrophe. It will no longer be necessary to reconcile "hardness" with good will, for his violence will be benevolent *by definition*.*

But is not a doctrine of necessity in which benevolence is present as an abstraction the supreme formula of ruthlessness? Is not the inhumanity of "good men," of priests and zealots determined to control events for the sake of man's salvation, always more consistent, thorough, and fervent than that of the merely vicious? The ruthlessness of the Communist, composed of benevolence attenuated by "science," recalls once more the image of the surgeon. Knowing that his act is good in that it is necessary, he is morally obligated to make himself indifferent to the pain of the patient. The Communist has chosen humanity itself as his patient, and he has become a "true Bolshevik" when his inner peace is unmarred by the ills which his deeds bring to particular individuals.

THE question of Lenin's relation to the Communism of today continues to be a subject for debate. The discussion usually takes a rather abstract, not to say, theological, form. The writings of the master and details of his biography are combed for evidence establishing or refuting Stalin's claim to be his legitimate heir. In the following paragraphs I shall try to suggest why, if these doctrinal disputes remain inconclusive, perhaps the strongest link between the first Red occupant of the Kremlin and the second is the figure of the Communist.

Wolfe and Shub leave no doubt that the essence of Lenin's doctrine and practice was total control of the Socialist movement at the top. To this extent, Stalinism is indisputably a "logical development" of Leninism. So logical, in fact, that its main features were

* On this score the Leninist imagination seems entirely deluded. History constantly repeats itself, preserves outworn modes, returns to the scenes of its crimes, and behaves generally as if it were overcome with guilt and nostalgia.

* The reader will recall the recent speech of Thorez on the attitude of the French Communists in the event of an invasion of France by the Red Army: he stressed that the Red Army was non-aggressive "by definition."

foreseen from the beginning. At the very founding congress of the All-Russian Social Democratic Labor party in 1903, many Socialists fully recognized that the type of centralized organization for which Lenin was desperately battling would inevitably be composed of members who, in the words of Martov, had "abdicated their right to think." The bitter debate on Article 1 of the party constitution brought from Axelrod the query: "Is not Lenin dreaming of the administrative subordination of an entire party to a few guardians of doctrine?" And shortly after the congress, Trotsky, who had sided with the opponents of Lenin on Article 1, wrote that Lenin's "egocentrism" would bring it about that "the organization of the Party takes the place of the Party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the organization; and finally the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee. . . ."

All the quotations in the previous paragraph are from Wolfe's study, one of the great merits of which is its detailing of the struggle on this crucial issue of party democracy. Yet despite the evidence he presents that Leninism meant dictatorship, Wolfe is able to state: "Up to his seizure of power in 1917, Lenin always remained by conviction a democrat, however much his temperament and will and the organizational structure of his party may have conflicted with his democratic convictions." A democrat who felt, willed, and functioned as a dictator! If democratic convictions formed part of Lenin's doctrine, might not that doctrine have been something quite different from Stalinism? The issue cannot be decided by reference to the events of the revolution. Control by a man so contradictory in principle would inescapably produce phenomena in which one could discern, if perhaps but dimly, the suggestion of a Leninism to which that of Stalin bears only an outer resemblance. Thus Trotsky could point to the violent disagreements among members of the Bolshevik Central Committee even after 1917, to Lenin's yielding to majority decisions even on such vital issues as Brest-Litovsk. And Wolfe, too, testifies to Lenin's constant self-criticism and his willingness to admit

errors openly, to his generosity in stretching out a hand to former political foes. These might have been but expedients to which Lenin was forced, as Stalin, too, has been forced into "democratic" moves. On the other hand, they might be glimpses of a democratic core in Leninism which under different circumstances might have revealed itself fully.

Plainly, there is no such core in Stalinism. And were Bolshevism like other political doctrines, Lenin, though responsible for his own autocracy and terrorism, might be little more responsible for its perpetuation and intensification by Stalin than, say (though the comparison is admittedly far-fetched), Lincoln's Republicanism is responsible for Hoover's. Programs, especially revolutionary programs, are changed, if not reversed, in the attempt to realize them. "People who imagined they had made a revolution," Wolfe quotes Engels as saying, "always saw the next day that they did not know what they had been doing, and that the revolution which they made was nothing like the one they wanted to make." If, as Trotsky claimed, the revolution was betrayed by Stalin, it might be equally true that Lenin was betrayed by the revolution. Along these lines, one could go on arguing forever as to what the "pure" doctrine of Leninism really was.

But the doctrine of Lenin is not like other political programs; it is even more than a *doctrine*, and is distinguished from Marxism itself in this respect. It belongs to that type of modern political movement to which one pledges not only his action but his very being. One could be a pre-World War I Marxist without making himself into a type. Bolshevism turned ideas into flesh—and flesh into an abstraction. Lenin invented the Communist *man*. This act of creation, whatever Lenin's doctrinal democracy, makes the Communist of today into a Leninist regardless of his party's political program, regardless of whether it is Right, Left, or "Centrist," regardless of whether it abandons revolutionary politics for collaboration or pushes revolution to the point of insane adventure.

Stalin saw in the existence of the *Communist* a fact above mere considerations of pro-

gram and doctrine; it was here that the connection lay between Lenin and the movement. Having seized the leadership of the Bolshevik personnel, through laying hands on the organizational apparatus (a deed of proper Leninism), his strategy lay entirely in preserving his cohesion with it and reproducing or curtailing it to serve his purpose.* By this appropriation of the Leninist type, the Leninism of *any* program he proposed was guaranteed.

For his part, Trotsky strove to dislodge Stalin by doctrinal interpretations, in the center of which he placed Lenin's internationalism, his "democracy," and his capacity to admit error—all irrelevant to the character of the Bolshevik. Fundamentally, the former non-Bolshevik despised the Bolshevik type, in which he saw only the bureaucratic flunky who had "abdicated his right to think." He refused to acknowledge that Leninism had *embodied itself* once and for all in this very flunky, and that apart from him it had no reality. Yet to an extent Trotsky did acknowledge it, for more than to the non-Communists he continued to address himself to the minds of men whose nature is that their minds exist at the end of thought.

GRANTED that Lenin, for all the authoritarianism of his thought and action, did believe in democracy; granted that, for all his conviction of being right, he could acknowledge that the facts had declared him mistaken. Granting all this, the doctrine of

* After writing the above, I came across the following description of the Chinese Communist party today; it indicates the degree to which Stalinism means the reproduction of the Leninist type regardless of program: "The bureaucracy for the entire country is developed in advance, in isolation, almost in laboratory fashion. . . . It deals with social groupings as a separate entity and by retention of its social independence determines the relationship between classes on the basis of the needs of its own rule. Thus Liu informs us that the policy for today is construction of a 'new capitalism' but that the party retains the liberty to move against this 'new capitalism' and its economic classes when it decides the time has come for 'socialism.' It is the party—or more accurately, the state-party-army—which is the bearer of historic change, no matter in whose name it acts at the moment." (*The New International*, February 1949.)

Bolshevism is not, as Trotsky contended, changed thereby. It is to life itself, not to doctrine, that the recognition of others and the experience of fallibility belong. "That was the strength of Lenin as revolutionist," says Wolfe, "that, despite his passionate and dogmatic attachment to centralized organization and its rigid control of the masses, he could thrust both into the background whenever the foaming, tumbling, creative and uncontrollable life of the million-headed mass in motion made their doctrinaire application dangerous to the Party's life." This living intuition of Lenin did not create the Bolshevik type. The Communist was the product of his external formulations, as rigorous as those of any scientist or disciplined artist. Whatever else there was in Lenin was thus doomed to die with him. Out of his tomb was bound to rise Leninism, the doctrine without the living man, from which the dialectical possibility of Bolshevik democracy and Bolshevik doubt had vanished forever. What appeared now was not a different doctrine but the creature of the doctrine, as distinct from its author.*

All differences between Lenin and the Communist of today refer back to this difference between an author and his creation. For instance, one who is an authority to himself, as Lenin was in those areas of theory and party work into which Marx and Engels had not penetrated, is never, no matter how authoritarian he be, comparable to the one who takes the dead for his authority. The living man convinced of his own rightness was never to that degree excluded from perception and communication as is his invention, the Man Who Knows. To restore "Lenin's Bolshevism" in the face of Lenin's creature, Trotsky would have had to do nothing less than bring Lenin himself back to life. For without Lenin, party democracy and the admission of error were to the Bolshevik but alien thoughts—as Stalin said, thoughts of a Menshevik.

* Georges Sorel in his *Reflections on Violence* quotes Bergson's observation that "the master insofar as he formulates, develops, translates into abstract ideas what he brings is already in a way his own disciple." He is not identical with the disciple, but he does resemble him by way of the doctrine.